6/12/70

CONFIDENTIAL TO HAROLD AND DICK: RE BAKER AND COUCH MOVIE

I am currently in the process of writing up memos on the Couch and Weigman frames received from Lifton. These memos mostly deal with explaining how and when the photographers filmed and using their crucial movies to determine the time of exposure of other published pictures. However, there is one aspect of the Couch movie which is quite important since it is the incontrovertable proof that LHO was not the assassin. I stress this because there was always one aspect of doubt in my mind prior to seeing this movie. However, I do not want this to go further than us three--certainly not to Lifton, so I write it up seperate from the other stuff which I will probably distribute on a wider basis.

PRIOR BASIS FOR DOUBT: It has been established that Officer Baker is not a reliable witness. Therefore, his account of his actions during the shots and prior to encountering Truly at the TSBD entrance is open to question. The account of the movements across the first floor and up to the second is supported by Truly. However, if Baker did not reach the front entrance as fast as he indicates he did and as fast as the WC (falsely) reconstructed, then there still exists the possibility that LHO had enough time to get down from the 6th floor. I have corresponded with Harold on this.

Germane to this is Gloria Calvery. Shelly and Lovelady testified she ran up to them after the shots and that subsequent to her arrival a police officer ran into the TSBD. However, Joe Molina testified that the officer ran in before Calvery arrived. In his affidavit of 11/22/63, Shelly says he ran to Calvery on the knoll. Meagher gives an instance in her book which shows other contradictions in the Lovelady-Shelley testimonies. What troubled me is that it seems that it would have taken Gloria (who had been standing near the Stemmons sign) more than 15 seconds to reach the TSBD entrance, speak to the people there and begin running away, which, in essence, is what Shelley and Lovelady described. The WC found that, based on a starting time 7 seconds too early, it would have taken Baker 15 seconds to reach the entrance (7H593). However, if Molina was right, then there is no problem.

So, on the basis of the WC's evidence, I could not conclusively establish when Baker got to the entrance. If he took, say, 30 seconds, then the times become closer, and it would be unfair to say that it was physically impossible for the 6th floor assassin to reach the lunchroom in time to encounter Baker. Dismissing likelihood, probability, and other evidence relating to LHO's innocence, it could not be said absolutely that his arrival on time on the second fllor was a physical impossibility had he been on the 6th floor.

BAKER'S POSITION IN MOTORCADE AND AT TIME OF SHOTS: Baker described his position in the motorcade at 3H244-5. He says he was flanking the last press car. However, his other descriptions indicate that he actually meant photographers car as opposed to press. Support for this is provided by Officer Haygood. His position was so far back in the motorcade that he was still on Main at the time of the shots. He said Baker was riding in front of him (6H297) and Baker was on Elm at the time of the shots. Malcolm Couch testified that a policeman was riding beside his car (6H 156) which was the last Camera car. Finally, Bob Jackson, who was in the same car as Couch, described a gust of wind as they turned from Main onto Houston (2H158). Baker also said a strong wind hit him as he made the turn (3H245). Likewise, Baker says he was 60-80 feet ~~XXXX~~ along

Houston, north of Main, when the first shot was fired (3H246). Those in Camera car 3 also indicate that they were in this general position on Houston at time of the first shot (Jackson:2H158, Couch:6H156, Dillard:6H163-4, Underwood:6H169). Thus, it is rather obvious that Officer Baker was flanking camera car 3, and that at the time of the assassination he was in proximity to it.

There is great significance to this which I had earlier missed. Based on the measured distance from Main and Houston to the point on Houston where Baker was at time of first shot, Baker concluded he traveled 180 to 200 feet to where he parked his cycle--that is from time of first shot to time of cycle dismount, he went 180 to 200 feet(3H246-7). As Harold points out in WWI, the whole reconstruction of Baker's movements began with the first shot (3H252). An affidavit by Baker indicates that it took him 15 seconds during the reconstruction to travel the 180 to 200 feet (7H593).

Of course, the reconstruction should have started at the time o f the last shot, which means that there are about 7 extra seconds on that time, making it around 8 seconds for that part of the movments. The distance travelled by the motorcade during the shots was about 116 feet, which would have put Baker very close to the intersection of Houston and ELm at time of last shot, and at the most 84 feet from where he parked his cycle (200-116=84). Likewise, the men in camera car 3 said they were near the intersection at time of last shot (Underwood:6H169, Couch:6H158,Jackson:2H159). So, on the basis of this alone, Baker had a relatively small distance to go to get to where he parked his cycle, with an estimated time of 8 seconds.

REVALATIONS OF COUCH FILM: Couch testified that he began filming as the car turned the corner into Elm (6H158). In the frames provided by Lifton, there is a sequence which begins by showing the front portion of the isle between the two Elm streets,plus the west end of the TSBD, with the crowds milling around. As Couches car moved thrcugh the turn, Elm St. comes into view, as does the rest of the isle, including the more eastern part of the knoll. This, based on the fact that camera car 3 made the turn so soon after the last shot, would have been exposed no more than 10 seconds after the last shot.

Baker testified that he parked his cycle about 10 feet east of the traffic light at the head of that isle(3H247-8) and he marked this position with a "B" on CE 478. David Weigman took movies of this area during the shots, and there is no cycle there. However, as Couch's car rounds the corner in his film, this general area comes into view and there is clearly a motorcycle parked next to the curb with no officer on or around it. Although the photos themselves may be misleading, photogrametric analysis places this motocycle either directly across from or slightly to the left or west of the traffic light. This is not in great conflict with Baker's testimony, and it is doubtful that Baker himself took great notice of the exact position of his cycle in that confusion.

The presence of Baker's cycle, parked and abandoned, in the Couch film some 10 seconds after the last shot has great significance. In spite of unreliable or contradictory witness accounts, this is the incontrovertible proof that Baker did immediately rev up his cycle, park it, and leave it, all under 10 seconds. It leaves no room for possible excuses as to how he may have delayed.

Support for this is found in a previously unnoticed portion of Bob Jackson's testimony in which he says he saw an officer run up the TSBD steps toward the front door after the last shot as his car

(camera car 3) was turning the corner of Houston and Elm(2H164).
Of course, Baker arrived at this position prior to camera car 3 because he revved up his cycle while the car, according to its occupants, hesitated as 2 men jumped out.

So, it is photographically proven that Baker took between 5 and 8 seconds to get to a place the WC says took 15 seconds. Combining this with the other efforts to slow him and Truly down, he could have gotten (and probably did get) to the second floor in about a minute and 10 seconds. Even with its almost comical "reconstruction" of the assassin's movements, the WC could not get a 6th floor gunman down to the second floor that fast. In fact, adding to the 6th floor reconstruction what the WC left out, it would have taken the "gunman" at least a minute and 40 seconds to get down there.

Thus, all quibbling and speculation can be put to rest. We can be 100% sure that Baker got to the front entrance immediately and that LHO could not have been on the 6th floor.

Howard Roffman